

Keeping the Pros in the Know

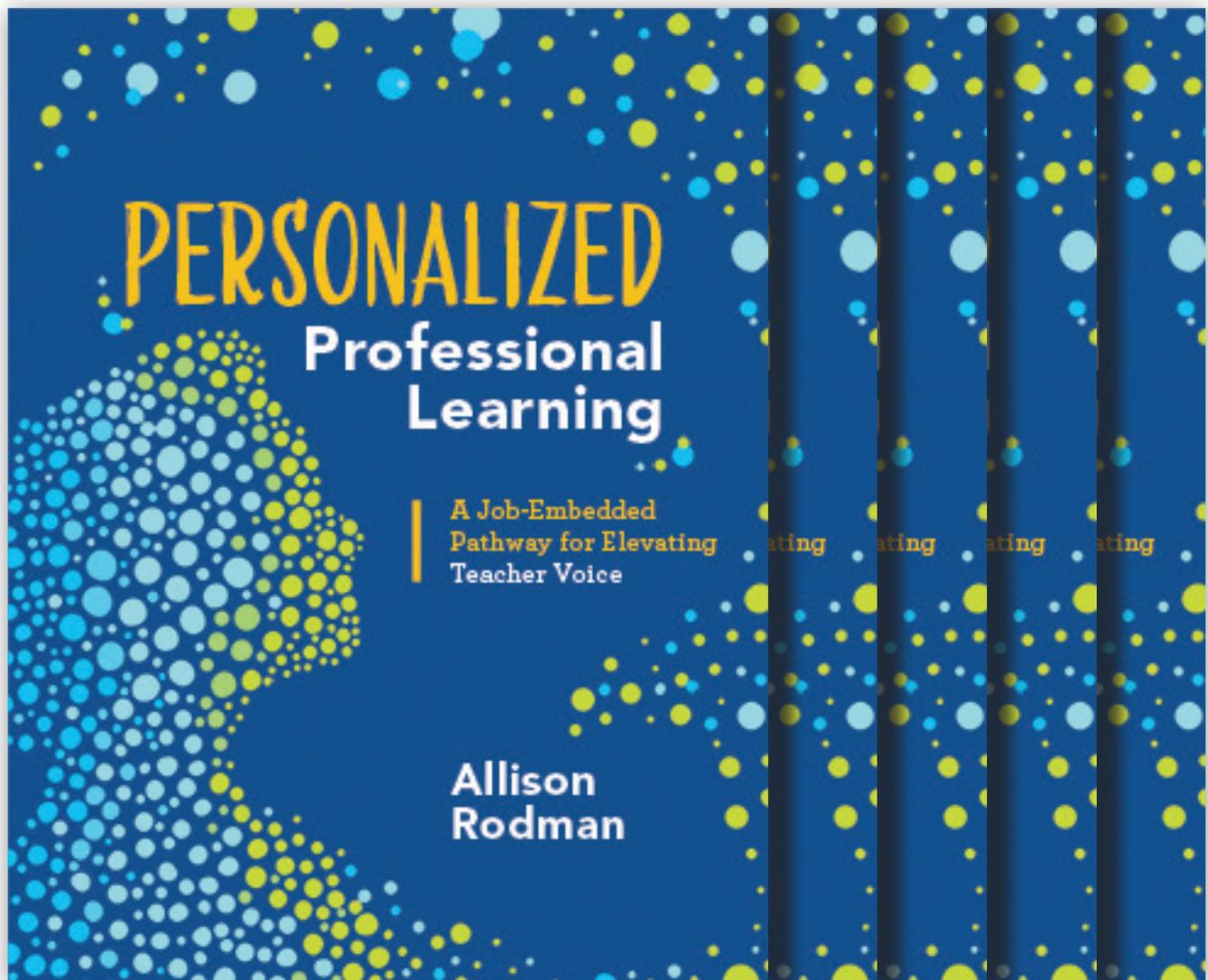
***Personalized Professional Learning* helps principals implement alternative learning strategies for teachers**

By Jennifer Truitt-Lewis

Teacher professional development has evolved from whole-group delivery to individualized professional development (PD). No longer is one-size-fits-all professional development the best method of delivery for teacher learning, according to *Personalized Professional Learning: A Job-Embedded Pathway for Elevating Teacher Voice*.

Rooted in Malcolm Knowles' Adult Learning Theory, the book focuses on professional development from the standpoint that adult learners have specific needs that must be addressed in order to be successful. And with these needs comes a need for a change in the way that professional development is delivered.

Author Allison Rodman advocates a model for change that results in high-quality professional learning, providing administrators and professional development coordinators with a road map for transforming "sit-and-get" professional development into professional development that focuses on learning.



Personalized Professional Learning: A Job-Embedded Pathway for Elevating Teacher Voice. Allison Rodman. ASCD, 2019.

Professional development now takes on the characteristics of professional learning, in which teachers are involved in the process from the beginning. From having a voice regarding what professional development is offered to serving as facilitators for the delivery of professional learning, teachers are important pieces of the puzzle. Each chapter focuses on a piece of the puzzle that, when completed, becomes a personalized professional learning model that individualizes what professional learning means for teachers.

Implementation is the main goal.

Transitioning from traditional “sit-and-get” professional development to a personalized learning model is something that leaders may find overwhelming. But the author takes the reader through each step needed to assist in accomplishing this mission, breaking the process down into four important parts of the transition: Voice, Co-creation, Social Construction, and Self-Discovery.

The book focuses on each part in order, allowing leaders to concentrate on one at a time. Part 1, Voice, tells the importance of teacher voice and engagement in the “what” and “how” of learning. Part 2, Co-creation, supports leaders in building a professional learning model in which teachers and teacher leaders collaborate. Part 3, Social Construction, addresses the logistics

of design and facilitation of professional learning experiences. Finally, Part 4, Self-Discovery, tackles the issue of expanding a vision to support future growth.

Shared leadership and teacher voice take a front seat in the transition to ensure PD’s success. “If teachers are to own their professional growth, their agency and voice need to be affirmed in the process,” the author writes. Not only are teachers called upon to lend their voice to areas such as suggesting topics for professional learning, but teacher leaders are also a critical part of the process, evaluating professional learning plans, serving as sounding boards, identifying potential pitfalls, and being the facilitators of the professional learning sessions.

The recommendations provided in the book allow leaders to rethink and evaluate the current state of their professional learning options. The most beneficial recommendation is to start small and take intentional steps: “Teachers’ perception of the model will directly correlate to its quality—not [its] size,” the book says.

Be Intentional

In reading *Personalized Professional Learning*, I found myself reflecting on the changes I could make to start building a personalized professional learning model, but I reminded myself of the importance of starting small. Such a change may represent not only a shift in professional development, but it also might represent a shift in culture. These shifts take time, and the author reminds us overly excited leaders—myself included—to slow down and be intentional about implementation.

The information provided will shape my own leadership journey, however, because it provides support in addressing the need for a change in how we approach professional development. My first small step will focus on confirming that I lead a culture of learning to guarantee that the groundwork is there. This book is full of advice, tools, and support for implementing a personalized learning model. With *Personalized Professional Learning* as a resource, leaders won’t be left to their own devices.

The author makes sure that implementation is the main goal, while reflection questions allow leaders to self-assess what they need to do next in order to make the transition. The “Tools for Taking Action” section of the book provides outlines, surveys, and examples that can furnish administrators with both a starting point and assistance along the way.

The first of the 14 tools provided is a goal-identification and progress self-assessment for the leader. A professional needs assessment can then help administrators figure out how to know what teachers need. From there, leaders can begin collaborating with others on the best methods for implementing a more personalized professional learning approach.

Armed with these tools, the only thing a leader needs to do is focus on implementation. Following Rodman’s road map, leaders can explore an alternative to traditional professional development. ■

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